

# News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Governor Davis Signs AB 1476

### **Historic and Prehistoric Native American Sites To Benefit from New State Park Unit Classification**

SACRAMENTO – Governor Gray Davis has signed legislation by Assemblyman Ed Chavez setting up a process whereby historic and prehistoric areas that have important resource management needs -- such as sensitive Native American sites -- could be placed under a new California State Park classification of "cultural reserve" and benefit from appropriate protection.

The legislation, AB 1476, would ensure the appropriate classification of state park units selected and managed for the purpose of preserving and protecting the integrity of places that contain historic or pre-historic structures, villages, or settlements, archaeological features, ruins, artifacts, inscriptions, burial grounds, landscapes, hunting or gathering sites or similar evidence of past human lives or cultures.

California State Parks Director Ruth Coleman praised enactment of AB 1476, saying it would "result in the best use of these park units for the protection and preservation of valuable cultural resources and for the education and enjoyment of the public."

She noted that the appropriate classification of each state park unit is essential as classifications determine the appropriate types and levels of use at a park unit.

Assemblyman Chavez, D-City of Industry, said, "I am pleased this measure made it through the legislative process and was signed by the Governor. My bill provides that sites with cultural and spiritual significance to California Native Americans are given an added measure of protection, which in a historical sense is important to all Californians."

Dean Mike, Chairman of the 29 Palms Band of Mission Indians and President of the Native American Land Conservancy, said the legislation "provides much needed assurances that sites with a cultural and spiritual significance to California Native Americans are given an added measure of protection."

He called the legislation "an important step forward in our collective efforts to preserve and protect these sites, areas, and resources for present and future generations."

The NALC is an intertribal organization that is dedicated to the protection of Native American sacred lands, sites, areas and resources.

Currently, the state's park unit classification system does not include a classification that describes holdings intended primarily for preserving and protecting historic and pre-historic features and artifacts.

The "State Historic Park" classification currently exists, but it is not ideal for such properties because that classification encourages a higher degree of recreation and visitor activity than is appropriate for these sites. State Parks has a "Cultural Preserve" classification, but it is only available to subunits of existing units. And while the current "cultural preserve" classification could be used for sites within an existing unit, it is not appropriate for a geographically isolated site.

Examples of current state park units that may be appropriate for the "cultural reserve" classification include:

- **Chumash Painted Cave State Historic Park** -- This sandstone cave houses religious drawings by Chumash Native Americans, as well as likenesses of coastal fishermen that date back to the 1600s. Located above Santa Barbara in a steep canyon, the site preserves fine examples of Native American art on the sidewalls of the rock shelter.
- **Tomo Kahni State Historic Park** -- The Tomo-Kahni Project: Kawaiisu Native American Village became a unit of state parks in 1993 to protect and preserve the integrity of the location. Nestled atop a ridge in the Tehachapi Mountains, overlooking Sand Canyon to the east and the Tehachapi valley to the west, Tomo-Kahni, or "Winter Village," was the site of a Lawaoosi (Nuooah Village). The location was likely chosen for its moderate temperature and plentiful resources. The Kawaiisu migrated from the Great Basin and made the Tehachapi their home for two to three thousand years. The Kawaiisu are noted for their finely woven baskets of intricate and colorful design.
- **Wassama Round House State Historic Park** -- This site is used by local Native Americans as a ceremonial meeting place. The park features special events and tours. Gathering Day, held the second Saturday in July, includes demonstrations of dancing, crafts and basket weaving. The park is located in Ahwahnee.

In addition, the classification would be used for future State Parks acquisitions, where appropriate.

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